

Subject: *Understanding and Applying God's Word*

Scripture: Acts 8:26-35

Why is the Bible so important? Because it contains the mind and will of God. It is our source of authority and our handbook for living. For that reason we need to understand it and live it. In our text the man from Ethiopia was reading the book of Isaiah. Philip asks, "Do you understand what you are reading?" He says, "How can I unless someone guides me?" In other words he asks, "Does that make sense to you?" and he says, "I need help." With that story in mind I want to come alongside and offer help to you. I am going to give you three steps that will help you to understand and apply God's Word to your life.

1. OBSERVATION – What does the Bible say?

- Read carefully – Many times Jesus referred to the Scripture, "Have you not read...?"
- Isaiah 53 has many pronouns (he, him). If you read the entire chapter it speaks of he, him, and we.
- ***Isaiah 53:6*** *All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.*
- ***2 Corinthians 5:21*** *For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.*

2. INTERPRETATION – What does the Bible mean?

We need human help (Acts 8:31) and, more importantly, we need God's help. Something happened between Acts 8:35 and 8:36. The Ethiopian was saved. His spiritual eyes could see. Now the Bible made sense to him.

- We must depend on the Holy Spirit – The one who inspired Scripture is the same one who explains Scripture. See ***1 Corinthians 2:11-14***. The Holy Spirit does not eliminate our need for human teachers. In fact, the Holy Spirit enables people to explain His Word through preaching and teaching. Inspiration has to do with the men who wrote the Bible. Illumination has to do with us who read and study what was written. ***Psalms 119:18*** *Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law.*
- We must desire to understand – See ***Proverbs 2:1-6***.
John 5:39 *Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me.*
Acts 17:11 *These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.*
2 Timothy 2:15 *Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.* The word "study" means to make every effort, be diligent.
- We must discover the meaning God intended – Our goal is to find the original intent of the author (God) and original meaning to the readers. We must let the Bible say what God meant instead of reading in our own opinions and thoughts of what it means. In all preaching and Bible study, John Stott says we are dealing with two worlds: the world of the Bible and the world we now live in. We must build a bridge over that wide gap if we are to understand what the Bible means.

- The history gap
- The geography gap
- The language gap
- The culture gap

3. APPLICATION – What does the Bible mean to me personally?

How does it penetrate and change my life? How does it affect my attitude and actions?

- Scripture has one correct interpretation but many applications

God's Word is meant to be studied, understood, and applied. Like a detective, a wise Bible student will develop the habit of asking questions.

Ten Questions that Bible Readers Ask:

- ✓ Is there a sin to confess?
- ✓ Is there a promise to claim?
- ✓ Is there an attitude to have?
- ✓ Is there a command to obey?
- ✓ Is there an example to follow?
- ✓ Is there a prayer to pray?
- ✓ Is there a mistake to avoid?
- ✓ Is there a warning to heed?
- ✓ Is there an attribute to praise God for?
- ✓ Is there a blessing to thank God for?

I want us to think about the importance of applying Scripture by looking at three passages:

- **Romans 12:2** *And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.* We are to submit to God's Word and let it transform our lives.
- **2 Timothy 3:16-17** ¹⁶ *All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:* ¹⁷ *That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.* All of these uses (doctrine, etc.) imply that Scripture must be understood and applied.
- **1 Peter 2:2** *As newborn babes, desire the sincere (pure) milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby.* A baby desires milk, drinks milk, and then digests it. All three things must happen if the baby is to grow and be healthy. The same process works in our spiritual life: we desire the Word, drink in the Word, and digest the Word, and then we grow as a result.